

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W

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R 301819Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6029

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMCONSUL ASMARA

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EXDIS

E O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PINS, PFOR, UK, ET, SU

SUBJECT: KAGLEW FOUR AND BRITISH HONORARY CONSUL

SUMMARY: FCO OFFICIAL SAYS BRITISH HAVE MADE PRELIMINARY, NON-OFFICIAL CONTACT WITH ELF IN KHARTOUM AND ARE PREPARING TO SEEK OUT PLF IN JIDDA REGARDING KIDNAPPED CONSUL BURWOOD-TAYLOR. BRITISH JOURNALIST RECOUNTS SORRY FIX OF THREE KAGNEW EMPLOYEES KIDNAPPED WITH STRICKLAND AND BOWIDOWICZ. END SUMMARY.

1. MARTIN EWANS, HEAD OF FCO EAST AFRICA DEPARTMENT, INFORMED EMBASSY OFFICER OCTOBER 30 THAT BRITISH HAD BEEN IN TOUCH WITH ELF REPRESENTATIVES IN KHARTOUM ON MATTER OF KIDNAPPED BRITISH HONORARY CONSUL IN ASMARA, BURWOOD-TAYLOR. EWANS SAID GO-BETWEEN WITH BRITISH EMBASSY AND ELF IS NOT BRITISH OFFICIAL AND CONTACT HAS THEREFORE REMAINED INFORMAL. BRITISH HAVE BRIEFED NEITHER THE SUDANESE NOR THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENTS ON THIS INITIAL CHANNEL TO THE ERITREANS, ALTHOUGH THEIR AMBASSADORS IN ADDIS AND KHARTOUM HAVE BEEN AUTHORIZED TO DO SO IF CIRCUMSTANCES WARRANT (EWANS WOULD OBVIOUSLY LIKE THIS INFORMATION WELL GUARDED). BRITISH HAVE ALSO PREPARED RELIEF PACKAGE FOR BURWOOD-TAYLOR SIMILAR TO THAT DIS-
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PATCHED TO TWO AMERICANS HELD BY ELF. EWANS SAID

BURWOOD-TAYLOR HAS A HEART CONDITION WHICH WOULD NOT PERMIT HIM TO ENDURE AN ARDUOUS CAPTIVITY.

2. EMBASSY OFFICER ASKED WHETHER BRITISH WERE CERTAIN THEIR CONSUL IS IN THE HANDS OF ELF AND NOT THE PLF. EWANS SAID THEY ORIGINALLY SUSPECTED THE ELF, BUT A RECENT REPORT THAT BURWOOD-TAYLOR HAD BEEN SITED NORTH OF ASMARA INDICATES THE PLF MAY HAVE BEEN THE ABDUCTORS. ON THIS POSSIBILITY, BRITISH AMBASSADOR IN JIDDA HAS BEEN INSTRUCTED TO TRY TO CONTACT PLF REPRESENTATIVES THROUGH THE SAUDI GOVERNMENT.

3. ASKED WHY BURWOOD-TAYLOR WOULD HAVE BEEN A POLITICAL TARGET FOR ERITREAN REBELS, EWANS SUBSCRIBED TO THE PUBLICITY THEORY, SAYING THE ERITREANS HOPE TO INDUCE FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS TO TAKE THEIR MOVEMENT MORE SERIOUSLY AS WELL AS TO EMBARRASS PUBLICLY THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT IN ADDIS. HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT BURWOOD-TAYLOR WAS NOT AN ESPECIALLY POPULAR FELLOW IN ASMARA AND THAT HE MAY HAVE BEEN A VICTIM OF PERSONAL, RATHER THAN OF POLITICAL ANIMOSITY.

4. EWANS CONFIRMED BRITISH POLICY THAT ANY CONTACT WITH EITHER THE ELF OR PLF WOULD NOT CONSTITUTE NEGOTIATIONS AND THAT THE CONSUL'S RELEASE MUST BE UNCONDITIONAL.

5. IN A SUBSEQUENT CONVERSATION WITH FREE-LANCE JOURNALIST GWYNNE ROBERTS, WHOSE ACCOUNTS OF ELF ACTIVITIES HAVE JUST APPEARED IN THE FINANCIAL TIMES, EMBASSY OFFICER

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HEARD AGAIN THAT BURWOOD-TAYLOR HAD ACCUMULATED AN IMPRESSIVE LIST OF ENEMIES IN HIS MANY YEARS IN ASMARA. A GRADUATE WITH HONORS OF THE OLD SCHOOL, BURWOOD-TAYLOR'S ATTITUDES APPARENTLY HAVE GRATED ERITREAN SENSIBILITIES FOR A LONG TIME. ROBERTS WAS NEVERTHELESS SURPRISED THAT A NON-AMERICAN HAD BEEN SNATCHED. IN HIS WEEKS WITH THE ELF, HE HAD HEARD TIME AND AGAIN THAT MORE AMERICANS WOULD BE KIDNAPPED BY THE REBELS AND THAT NO AMERICAN WAS SAFE IN ASMARA.

6. ROBERTS ALSO SAID THAT IN EARLIER CONTACTS WITH EMBASSY OFFICERS HE HAD NEGLECTED TO MENTION THAT HE HAD SEEN THREE OF THE FOUR ETHIOPIAN EMPLOYEES KIDNAPPED FROM KAGNEW ALONG WITH STRICKLAND AND BOWIDOWICZ. THE FOURTH, HE BELIEVES, JOINED THE ELF. THE THREE OTHERS, HOWEVER, ARE IN A SORRY STATE. THEY ARE NOT WELL CARED FOR, THEY ARE FRIGHTENED TO RETURN TO ASMARA IF RELEASED, AND THEY DO NOT WISH TO JOIN THE ELF RANKS. THEY ARE ESPECIALLY FEARFUL FOR THEIR FAMILIES AND CONCERNED THAT THEY MAY HAVE BEEN DROPPED FROM THE KAGNEW PAYROLL. IF PERMITTED TO LEAVE BY THE ELF, THEY NOW PLAN TO MAKE THEIR WAY TO SUDAN AND THE AMERICAN EMBASSY IN KHARTOUM.

7. ROBERTS ALSO MENTIONED THAT HE HAD RECEIVED PACKETS
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OF LETTERS FOR STRICKLAND AND BOWIDOWICZ FROM THEIR FAMILIES. HE HAS SENT THESE ON TO HIS ELF CONTACTS IN KASSALA AND ENCLOSED SEVERAL PHOTOGRAPHS OF ELF COMMANDERS WHICH HE HOPES WILL PUT THE CAPTORS IN A CONGENIAL MOOD.

RICHARDSON

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